

Weston
Upper Marlboro, Md.

Prince Georges Co.

HABS No. MD-6668

HABS
MD.

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PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA
District of Washington, D.C.

Historic American Buildings Survey
Delos H. Smith, District Officer
1707 Eye St., N.W., Washington, D.C.

WESTON
(Claggett, Thomas VI House)
6601 Old Crain Highway
Upper Marlboro Vicinity
Prince Georges County
Maryland

HABS NO. MD-668

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Addendum To:
WESTON
Old Crain Hwy. Vic.
Upper Marlboro
Prince Georges County
Maryland

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Building Survey
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
P.O. Box 37127
Washington, D.C. 20013-7127

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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

WESTON
(Thomas Clagett VI House)

HABS NO. MD-668

Location: 6601 Old Crain Highway, Upper Marlboro, Prince George's County, Maryland

Present Owner: Henry C.B. Clagett (also present occupant)

Present Use: Private residence and horse farm

Significance: Weston is an excellent example of a large, early 19th-century Prince George's County brick plantation house with refined decorative details in the late-Federal and Greek Revival styles. The house was built ca. 1820 for the most successful plantation owner in the Upper Marlboro area, Thomas Clagett VI. The property has been in the Clagett family since before the turn of the 18th century, the site of the Clagett family homestead for nine generations.

Description: Weston sits atop a knoll, facing east, at the end of a long tree-lined drive which forms a circle to the front of the house. Boxwood is planted around the house, the drive, and in a garden area to the front of the house. There are also numerous old trees, including holly. Located on a low hill to the northeast of the house is a family cemetery. There is a brick gable-roofed smoke house directly west of the house, and further to the northwest is a complex of barns and sheds (both old and new). To the south side of the house is a pergola.

Weston has a two-and-a-half-story, five-bay-by-two-bay, gable-roofed main block (with a one-and-a-half-story, three-bay-wide kitchen wing to the north side). It is of brick construction, the east front laid in Flemish bond, and the rear and sides in Common bond (5:1). The main entry is to the center of the east facade, and has sidelights and an elliptical fanlight with an arched brick lintel extending beyond the sidelights. There is a six-panel door. The entry is covered by a simple portico with a balustrade and built-in benches to either side. The windows in the first story are nine-over-nine-light-sash, with nine-over-six-light-sash windows in the second story. The windows have flat-arched brick lintels, wood sills, and a narrow wood surround with a large inner bead. The windows have louvered shutters with shutter dogs. There are three dormers to both the east front and west rear, with round-arched, eleven-over-six-light-sash windows flanked by pilasters. The cornice consists of three projecting courses of brick, with the middle course turned in a sawtooth pattern. There are two interior brick chimneys to either gable end. The west rear is similar to the front facade but the central doorway is without a fanlight, and the window above it is lowered, located between stories to light the stairway landing.

The ell, located to the north side of the main block, is a one-and-a-half-story three-bay-by-one-bay brick structure laid in common bond (in a patchwork combination of 5:1 and 7:1) with a gable roof. There is a doorway to the south end of the east front (formerly a window as seen in a 1936 HABS photograph). The windows are six-over-six-light-sash with brick lintels and louvered shutters.

There are two gable-roofed wall dormers, also with six-over-six-light-sash windows. To the rear, two stories of porches have been enclosed (with brick on the first floor and wood frame on the second). There is a large brick chimney, south of center.

The interior of the main block has a center-hall plan with two adjoining rooms to either side (expanded from a one-room-deep plan). The hall has entries front and rear. A two-run, open-well, open-string stairway rises along the north wall to a landing and proceeds along the south wall. The stair continues to the third floor in the same manner. It has large turned newel posts (one at the base of the stair and two smaller ones at each landing) and delicately tapering balusters. The doorway moldings--like the doorway and window moldings found in the four first-floor rooms--are stepped architrave to the front of the hall, and multi-band profile with bulls-eyes, to the rear. The floor boards also differ, from the front of the house--where they are wide, to the rear--where they are narrow.

The two parlors to the south side of the hall are joined by a double doorway with folding doors. Both rooms have a fireplace to the center of the south wall with a mantel with paneled pilasters and a fluted, pillowed frieze. The northwest dining room has a fireplace mantel with pilasters and a five-part frieze with oval shell medallions on the center and side panels. The dining room is the only room with chair rail. There is a doorway on the north wall into the kitchen wing, and an open doorway on the east wall connecting the dining room with the den. The den is the only room with a crown-molding cornice. The fireplace has a mantel with fluted, pillowed pilasters and a five-part frieze with raised panels to the center and sides. Built-in bookcases cover the east wall. In the wing, there are two rooms to the east front, now used as a pantry and an office. The (modern) kitchen is to the rear.

The second floor follows the same pattern as the first with a center hall, four bedrooms, and a bath over the front entry. Like the first floor, the moldings in the east front of the house are stepped architrave, and to the west rear, a simpler version of that on the first floor--a multi-band profile with plain corner blocks. The fireplace mantels in the east front bedrooms are a slightly simpler version of that found in the den. The west rear bedrooms have plain mantels. A hall, perpendicular to the main hall, connects the main block with the wing. There is a small bedroom to the east front with a boxed winder stairway, and a bathroom adjoining it to the rear. To the rear of the wing is an enclosed sleeping porch.

The third floor is finished with a bedroom to either side of the central stairhall. This area was rebuilt after a fire in 1939, and the new trim is simple version of the multi-band profile with plain corner blocks. There is a full basement under both the main block and the wing.

History:

Weston--a large, brick, early 19th-century plantation house--has been the homestead of the Clagett family for nine generations. The current dwelling house was built ca. 1820 for Thomas Clagett VI, the most prominent landowner in 19th-century Upper Marlboro. As a testimony to his wealth, the area around Marlboro is dotted with the frame plantation dwellings that Thomas VI had built or acquired for his many children. Weston, however, is the finest of the Clagett family homes, and is the only one executed in brick.

The property--a 250 acre tract patented as "Weston" in 1671--was purchased by Thomas Clagett I before the turn of the 18th century. Prior to his death in 1703, he and his wife conveyed the Weston tract to their son, Thomas II. According to family tradition, Thomas II built a brick house on the property that later burned (not substantiated, although evidence of early brick foundations can be found under the current house). The property passed from Thomas II through the generations. Following the death of Thomas V in 1790, the property passed to his wife, Sarah, as guardian for their son, Thomas VI, who was born five months after his father's death. An appraisal taken by representatives from the Orphans Court described the improvements to the property as follows: "a small dwelling house weatherboarded with plank and covered with lap shingles in tolerable good repair, an old log kitchen in bad repair, a small new milk house, a tobacco house weatherboarded with plank...another tobacco house built with logs..." (Orphans Court Records, ST2:240).

Thomas VI received his father's estate upon reaching age of majority in 1812, and married soon after. It is Thomas VI who is credited with building the front section of the current dwelling house (a one-room-deep house), ca. 1820. This is confirmed by tax assessments which first note a substantial increase in 1825. The original house probably included a wing, perhaps part of an earlier structure.¹ Thomas VI fathered nine children during his first marriage, four of whom lived to adulthood. A few years after the death of his first wife in 1836, he remarried and five more children were born.

It was approximately at this time--with the sizable increase in his family--that Clagett expanded the house to two rooms in depth, adding a new stairway and raising the house from two to two-and-a-half stories. Evidence of the enlargement is evident in the brickwork in the south gable end, as well as the obvious changes in the moldings in the front versus the rear of the house. Thomas Clagett VI acquired other properties so that by 1860 he owned four plantations totalling over 2,000 acres, which produced 220 pounds of tobacco. He had become the wealthiest man in Marlboro. Between this time and his death

¹ The wing, however, is of common bond, generally used later than the Flemish bond found on the facade of the main block. The wing also blocks part of a north-side, second-floor window on the main block where it meets the wing. The wing does appear, however, to have been built in two parts, separated at the chimney block.

in 1873, he would provide seven plantation homes for his children. Upon his death, Weston passed to his son, Thomas VII, with tenancy for his wife, Adeline.

Thomas VII and his wife, Mary Bowie, took over the farming at Weston and established a canning factory on the property. They experienced financial problems, however, which eventually caused them to lose Weston in a mortgage default in 1887. The property was purchased by Charles Bonaparte who never lived here, but intended to reconvey the property to the Clagetts when they could afford to repurchase it. Weston, however, was tenanted until 1908 when the sons of Thomas VII and Mary, Thomas F.B. and Henry C.B. Clagett, were able to buy it back (one year after their father's death). Weston was taken over and operated by Henry Clagett for the next forty years. A fire in 1939 destroyed much of the third floor which was rebuilt at that time. Upon the death of Henry Clagett, Weston passed to his son, Henry C.B. Clagett, Jr., the current owner. Since that time Weston has been converted from a tobacco to a horse farm, operated by Henry Clagett, who is also an Upper Marlboro attorney.

Sources:

Pearl, Susan G. (PG HPC). Maryland Historical Trust/National Register of Historic Places Registration Form, Weston, prepared October 1987.

Interview with current owner, Mr. Henry C.B. Clagett, with Catherine C. Lavoie, HABS, September 15, 1991.

Historian:

Catherine C. Lavoie, HABS, January 1992.